

ROSES & CLEMATIS , HARMONIOUS COMPANIONS

By Beth Kerr

The lovely clematis, a large flowering climbing vine, has many uses in the garden, and may be of particular interest to the rosarian looking to enhance and compliment the beauty of roses. These strikingly beautiful flowers come in a variety of pastel and brilliant shades of pink, blue, red and white. Their blooming season, depending on the variety, can extend over a long period -from early spring through fall- making the clematis ideal for continuous garden color, beauty and interest.

I first became interested in the use of clematis with roses when I discovered that clematis could be intertwined with a climbing rose on a trellis. The color possibilities of such an arrangement are limitless. One might use a contrasting brightly colored clematis with a soft hued rose, or the reverse. I have also found that a clematis and rose create a cloud-like effect. I accomplish this monochromatic look with the pink hybrid musk **Lavender Lassie** intertwined with the clematis **Nellie Moses**, which is pale pink with a darker pink central bar. Each is rarely out of bloom. A more dramatic effect was created by using the deep purple clematis, **The President**, with the light pink climbing rose, **New Dawn**.

Elsewhere in the garden, I have established other interesting color combinations. There is a rose boarder to the side of a deck where I have planted three English roses. In the middle of the three is the clear yellow **Graham Thomas**, flanked on either side by the apricot, tinged yellow, **Abraham Darby**. Growing behind the roses as a backdrop, is the ever-blooming white clematis, **Duchess of Edinburgh**. It is intertwined with a bright blue clematis with white stamens, **H. F. Young**. The result is striking. In another area, the climbing rose **Antique '89**, a pink and white blend, is combined with the pristine, large white clematis, **Henryi**. Another favorite clematis, **Ramona**, a light blue variety, combines pleasingly with the white climbing rose **Lace Cascade** and crosses over to trail into a red and white climber. **Kiss of Desire**. Another vigorous variety, deep velvet purple in color, is **Polish Spirit**. It combines well with any color of rose. I have it growing in the garden with the climbing rose, **White Dawn**.

Clematis need not be grown with climbing roses only. It may be used as a ground cover under roses and may also be allowed to grow up into and over shrub roses, creating color when roses are not in bloom. Some clematis do very well in partial shade too.

One might wonder if at pruning time the tangle of roses and clematis present a problem. All can be kept relatively simple because both are pruned at the same time. Rarely can a clematis be ruined by improper pruning. In fact, clematis seem to thrive and flower abundantly after a good pruning.

There are many varieties of clematis, most of which are available by catalog and through local nurseries. Perhaps the most sought after is the true blue variety. The bluest large flowering clematis available is **H. F. Young**. It is a piercing, bright mid-blue and truly outstanding in all respects. Another deeper clear blue is the ever popular, **General Sikorski**. **William Kennett** is also another fine blue and is an ever blooming variety, as is **Lasurstern**. On the lavender side of blue is the lighter hue **Ramona** and the slightly darker, wavy-petaled, **Will Goodwin**. All are excellent choices for the garden and to use with roses.

The white clematis yield some of the largest blooms, some of which measure 9 inches across. Two of these are **Candida** and **Henryi**. The white clematis **Duchess of Edinburgh** has a smaller sized bloom but it does produce quantities of flowers. I find the white varieties are wonderful for brightening areas of the garden.

There are some heavenly pink and rose shades available in clematis. **Hagley Hybrid** is a lovely shell pink with purple anthers. **Comtesse De Bouchard** is a rich medium pink with a yellow center. Also available is the reliable deep pink, **Ernest Markham**.

Perhaps no red could be more vibrant than that of **Niobe**, a stunning ruby velvet color with a yellow button center.

One of the most popular and beloved of all clematis is the vivid purple **Jackmanii Superba**. It provides a constant profusion of blooms all summer and well into the fall.

There are many wonderful clematis available on the market, which are far too numerous to mention here. In my garden, I currently have thirteen different varieties. It is a never ending temptation (as the rosarian understands only too well) to add just one more clematis. I'm quite sure there will always be one more color that I cannot be without!

Recommended Reading:

1. Raymond J. Evison: Making The Most of Clematis, Third Edition., Nottingham, Wisbech, UK,: Burall Floraprint Ltd., 1995.

2. John Howells: The Rose and The Clematis as good companions, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK, Antique Collectors' Club Ltd., Garden Art Press, 1996. (This excellent book is available through the American Rose Society and local book stores.)

Sources for Clematis:

1. Carroll Gardens, 444 East Main Street, Westminster, MD, 410-848-5422, Toll free: 1-800-638-6334. (They carry over 70 varieties and will ship UPS.)
2. Cavazos, 6945 Sunshine Ave., Kingsville, MD, 410-492-8077. (They carry about 20 of the best varieties.)
3. Wayside Gardens (Mail Order): 1-800-845-1124.

My special thanks to Beth for this interesting article on the use of clematis in the rose garden. After visiting the Royal National Rose Society's Gardens of the Rose in St. Albans, England, where clematis and roses are used to the mutual advantage of each other, I thought what a great idea to pass along to our readers. When I first visited Beth's rose garden and noted the spectacular use of clematis she had achieved I realized we had the perfect person in the Society to tackle the subject for the Newsletter. Thank you Beth! -Editor